

May/Jun, 2016

# *Affaire de Coeur*

*Bringing you 34 Years of Honest Reviews*

**It's Baacck**

**The *Affaire de Coeur* Reader/Writer Poll**

**You determine the winner!**

*Reviews*

Do you really someone critiquing  
your baby?

**Reviews!**

**Reviews!**

**Reviews!**



**See What It's Like to Spend a  
Week-end with Authors--2016**



# ***Knight Defenders***

***It was all King-  
freakin - Arthur's fault.***



***Knight Defenders***

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# Affaire de Coeur

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# Sandy Sullivan's A Weekend with the Authors--2016

*Authors, readers and fans come from all over to raise money for charity*

We were there, and we had fun, fun, fun!

Nashville, Tennessee, was the place to be in May of 2016 for authors and readers. If you wanted to have fun, meet a multitude of authors, meet the best readers *ever*, **A Weekend with the Authors** is where you wanted to be.

Hosted by Sandy Sullivan, the weekend was chock full of activities for readers and authors. Its focus was for readers to connect and meet on an up-close and personal level with their favorite authors and to meet new ones.

Sandy succeeded in her goal for everyone to have fun.



*Best Selling Author,  
Sabrina York*



*Sally Sullivan*

She carried it off, making it worth every moment for readers, and authors. There were so many authors and readers and not enough time! But, that's okay because there's always next year.

From the moment the readers and authors checked in until they left the gathering, there were a multitude of things to do:

Authors and a handful of readers interested in learning about writing attended classes like "Writing about Sex," "Naming and Creating Characters," and



*Elle Jameson on the bull*

blog/1050041/A\_Weekend\_  
with\_the\_Authors

Interested in going next year? Plans are under way for **A Weekend with the Authors 2017**. If you are interested in attending, all authors, and readers are welcome: [www.aweekendwiththeauthors.com](http://www.aweekendwiththeauthors.com)

“Sex in a Christian Book.”

Several fun adventures were at hand. The book signing on Saturday kept everyone busy. During the weekend, readers and authors interacted and played games like Cards against Humanity, Romance Pursuit, and Password. Of course, there was the Country Lovin’ Western Party, a delicious lunch with keynote speaker Sabrina York, Challenge of the Genres’ Costume Party, and the greatly enjoyed Basket Raffle.

**The Weekend with the Authors 2016** charity donations went to Operation Troop Aid. OTA provides care packages to our brave U.S. troops who serve our country. For more information about this wonderful group: [www.operationtroopaid.org](http://www.operationtroopaid.org)

Want to see pictures from the event? Visit the *Affaire de Coeur* Scratching Post blog: <http://www.affairedecoeur.com/>



*Authors, Hildie McQueen  
Leanne Tyler  
Victoria Vane*

# Reviews

## Do you really want a critique of your baby?

by Louise B. Snead

“There’s no such thing as bad publicity.”

Some credit Oscar Wilde with that quote, and it is true that he indulged in activities that brought him both good and bad publicity. But, is his statement true?

I’m not certain it is....at least when it comes to books.

A good book review can do several things:

It can influence a reader to purchase a book.

It can catapult a new author from obscurity to the limelight.

It can establish an air of legitimacy--if a book is reviewed by a certain company or a particular reviewer, it must be worthy. For example, without question, we trust the reviews of the *New York Times*. Their reviews give validity to a book.

A bad review of a book, on the other hand, can be deadly. (That may be too melodramatic.) Some authors are unable to separate a product from themselves. To them an attack on their book is a personal attack. Consequently, bad reviews have, on occasion, ended the careers of some upstart authors who feel as they they have poured their talents, time, and private, innermost feelings into a project that someone else deigned to say it/they was not good. They give up, not willing to risk it again.

On a lesser level, many readers, especially those who have book budgets, have to be particular about what they buy, and many of them read the reviews before they buy an unknown author or a newbie.

Because some readers are unforgiving, a bad book might sound the death knell from upcoming books for an author. Just like a good read will result in spreading the word about a new author or a recently released book, a reader can bad mouth a book to the point the author cannot recover. In other words, do you give the author of a book that did not meet your expectations a second chance? Conversely, have you purchased a book simply because someone told you it was good (given you a verbal book review?)

Why are books given poor reviews? The simplest answer is because it’s not very good. However, there are so many reasons why they’re not good. Sometimes,



*The existence of a review in a notable newspaper may give the book validity*

readers are unable to put their fingers on why they disliked a book. I will discuss the most important:

- **Prejudice.** For so many years and even now the romance genre has been stigmatized, labeled as “trash.” Early paranormals suffered the same attacks--shape-shifting, fantasies. Yet, I have seen so many romance novels that were “stolen” by literary people, minimally redone (toned down sex scenes), credited with a male author, and they get raving reviews for that same so-called trash. You won’t get me to expound; I cannot be bothered with law suits. Nonetheless, the late Octavia Butler would give me an amen about the success of her time travel book *Kindred*.



SHE'D HEARD THE STORIES OF THESE WOODS – NURSERY TALES SPUN TO FRIGHTEN CHILDREN INTO OBEDIENCE. OTHER, MORE TITILLATING VERSIONS, WHISPERED BEHIND DELICATE FINGERS AND PAINTED SILK FANS, DESCRIBED A RACE OF GIANT MEN CAPABLE OF CHANGING FORM, DARK SHAGGY BEASTS WHO'D LOVE NOTHING MORE THAN TO CAPTURE AND MATE WITH A DAUGHTER OF LIGHT.

## DARK MOONS RISING BY NIA FARRELL

A PNR OTHERWORLDLY SHIFTER MÉNAGE FROM DARK HOLLOW PRESS

- **Lack of originality.** When an author uses previously told stories, those stories had better be exceptional in every way with some insight or storyline never having been approached. Supposedly there are only five original plots so the re-telling of those plots has to be good. When they are not, criticism abound. Have you ever watched an “original” movie on the Hallmark channel and three minutes into it, you know how it’s going to end because it is really an old classic set in a different time? Something has to be really, really good to keep you watching (or, as Hallmark has recognized, someone). Everyone knows the tales of *Cinderella*, *King Arthur*, and *Robin Hood*. Don’t you recognize it almost as soon as you start to read it? It is not enough to update the time or setting. If there are two stepsisters who are mistreating the original, beautiful girl whose lonely father just married their mother, it’s *Cinderella* even if the step-sisters are lawyers or buyers for a big department store. To counterbalance the *ennui* of the plot, Hallmark has gotten new, old, and popular stars to appear in the often told tales, thereby transferring the viewers’ attention away from the mediocrity or familiarity of the plot to the familiar actor. Unfortunately, that’s not possible with the written word, and the book fails.
- **Poor characterization.** The book or project must endear the reader or media watcher to the characters. If readers don’t care about what happens to the main character, or worse yet, if they dislike the main characters, the author can forget about a good review. If the character is too stereotypical, he/she will lose fans. The heroes and heroines of old don’t fly any more--the abusive spouse, the petulant, immature woman, the villain who ties the innocent victim to the railroad tracks. Characters have to be developed into believable, consistent beings, capable of making the reader feel something whether it’s positive or negative. Just mention the name Hannibal Lector, and fans from every corner of the world will appear even though he has to be the most dreaded, evil character in modern literature and based on a real person.
- **Failure to wrap up a plot.** Have you even gotten to the end of a book and said, “Huh?” “What happened to...?” (a character who was mentioned in the beginning of middle part of the book but who was dropped like a hot potato) Literary hooks go at the beginning of a book, not at the end unless it is leading to a sequel. Unfinished plots are frustrating to the reader, even when they do lead to another book, and they may cross the author off their reading lists because of that. A nice denouement does wonders for a book and may create a real fan.
- **Poorly written.** Good grammar

*continued on page 11*



# Spotlight Interview



## *This month the Spotlight Shines on... Barbara Dan*

*Author of twelve historical romances, five of them Westerns, Barbara Dan first fell in love with the great Western storytellers at her public library in her teens. Totally hooked on swashbuckling heroes, she began to haunt the local cinema on a regular basis. This inspired this gawky, near-sighted A-student to pursue an acting career in New York and later Hollywood.*

**AdC:** *When did you start writing and why?*

**B.D.** Paying rent and eating are expensive in NYC, so I worked part-time in an office. I fed my creative appetites by acting, modeling, sold a few paintings in Greenwich Village, wrote comedy material for fellow actors, and performed as a night club comedienne.

**AdC:** *What have you learned about writing since you started?*

**B.D.** Role playing as an actor makes it easier to get inside the characters I write about. I can see their foibles, find the humor and pathos, and have fun with them.

**AdC:** *Tell us about your new book.*

**B.D.** Down on her luck and willing to take a risk, my heroine, Meg, earns her way west to a job as housekeeper for a rancher in Wyoming by caring for homeless waifs on an Orphan train. Most of the children get adopted en route, but when she gets to Cheyenne, she realizes that three youngsters still need parents. When her employer, Sam, realizes his predicament, he suggests they marry and raise them together.



**AdC:** *What is your idea of a perfect day?*

**B.D.** Having raised four children myself, I am wise enough never to assume that perfection is attainable!

**AdC:** *Do you have any hobbies?*

**B.D.:** Hobbies include reading, quilting, making brownies, oil painting, having a

lunch with a friend, watching old movies, clipping obituaries of people who always managed to find time to serve others in their community, prowling around in old cemeteries for characters' names for my next novel, and researching odd customs and facts in obscure museums.

**AdC:** *What authors do you admire?*

**B.D.:** There are so many currently that I hesitate to single out a few. I read in



Young and adventurous, Meg Wolverton takes a job as housekeeper sight-unseen with a rancher in rural Wyoming in 1873. To get there, she boards the Orphan Train and helps place several homeless waifs with adoptive families along the way.

But when Meg gets to Cheyenne, orphans Susie, Davey and Jimmy still need a home. Her new boss, widower Sam Gallagher, realizes he's been handed a ready-made family and suggests they get married — for the children's sake, of course!

Thus begins Meg's crash course in being a housewife and mother on the frontier.

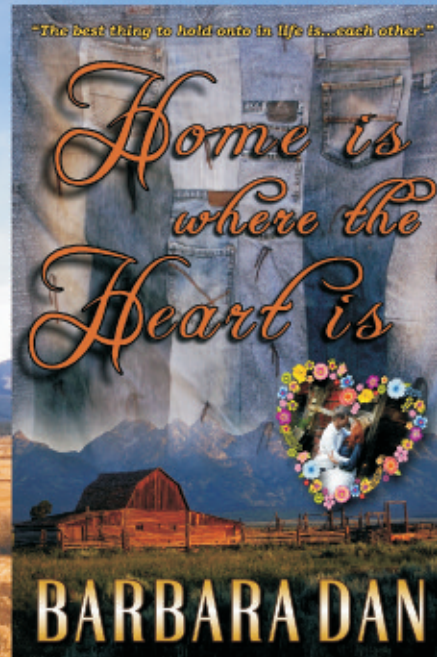
"The spiritual message is well done and not preachy... Humorous and populated with interesting characters, along with a passionate relationship between the leads, this is a good Western historical romance novel."

—Danielle Hill, ADC Reviewer.

ISBN: 978-1514730904

Available in Trade Paperback or eBook

To learn more about Barbara Dan's historical novels, visit: <http://barbaradan.com>



★★★★★ Star Review from *Affaire de Coeur Magazine*:

"A heartwarming historical romance...."

**HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS**

by award-winning author **BARBARA DAN**

many different genres, but if I stick to current romance writers, I'd have to say Cathy Maxwell for her wit, Barbara Delinsky for her complex relationships, Mary Balogh for making aristocrats lovable, Debbie Macomber, whose characters make me smile, and Linda Lael Miller, for her love of all things Western. Looking back, I cut my eye teeth on Kathleen Woodiwiss, LaVeryl Spencer, Jude Devereau, and Laura Kinsale; all highly skilled writers, and I am in their debt.

**AdC** *What is the worst thing about being an author?*

**B.D.:** Getting a crick in my back after a few hours hunched over the keyboard. The standing desks make life a lot better.

**AdC:** *The best thing [about being an author]?*

**B.D.:** Falling in love with my characters. But in the end, I sometimes cry when I have to say goodbye to them. That's why I am seriously considering a sequel to my latest novel, HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS. These are characters you want always to hold close to your heart.

**AdC:** *What do you expect to be doing 10 years from now?*

**B.D.:** *Sorry. I never plan that far in advance. I think I'll let God surprise me!*

**AdC:** *What can we expect from you next?*

**B.D.:** I've had some readers ask me to write a second book about the characters in HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS. However, I currently have a 3-book series in progress about the French refugees who fled their country during the Revolution and sought asylum in

the United States. Although there are historical similarities to what is going on currently in the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the American continent. It's a tall order, but I think I'll stick to the French immigrants for now.

**AdC:** *Pass on some words of wisdom, please to aspiring authors.*

**B.D.** Write from your heart. Don't imitate anyone else. Love your characters, and your readers will, too. P.S. It's OK to show their flaws. That's what makes them real.



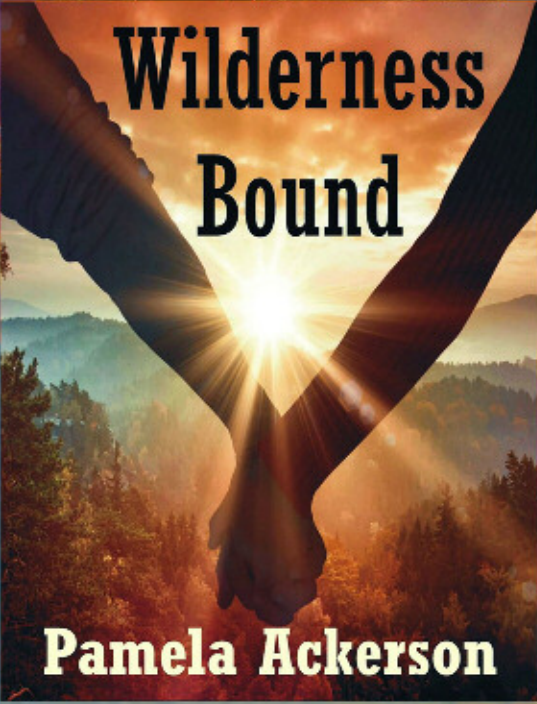
# The Wilderness Series



**ACROSS THE  
WILDERNESS**



**INTO THE  
WILDERNESS**



**Wilderness  
Bound**



**Warriors of the  
Wilderness**

**Pamela Ackerson**

**Pamela Ackerson**

*Wilderness series, book 4*

The time travel saga  
continues with book 5  
*Out of the Wilderness*  
September 2016  
[PamelaAckerson.com](http://PamelaAckerson.com)

and punctuation have fallen by the wayside in some of today's media. Even worse, some authors think that's the editors' job, not theirs. I'm not talking about typos. We've all seen the tests that prove that our minds subconsciously correct typos so it's easy to miss them. But it's not just the grammar. Sometimes the style which often borders on analytical and boring destroys a good story. Too much research may bog down a tale and changes the tone. Authors who show off their research by putting everything they found in the story risks losing the reader among the multitudinous trivia. A rule of thumb to remember is: Anything that disrupts the flow of the story is a bad thing.

With the advent of "indies" and self-pubs, it's getting harder and harder for an author to get his/her book reviewed. Might I suggest a few hints to authors about getting one's book reviewed.

1. Never pay for a review. Whereas, review media needs the support of the authors and readers, it should not be selling reviews. Plus, there is no guarantee the author or reader will be satisfied with what they have paid for. I have heard that some on-line reviewers charge as much as

\$2-\$300 for a single review. How could a simple, vague review

2. Try your local news media. Newspapers love locals and will often gladly do a review or even an interview.

3. There are review groups

## ***"Anything that disrupts the flow of the story is a bad thing"***

that review specific genre. Not all groups are interested in multiple genre. *Kirkus* reviews sci-fi/fantasy. *Lambda* reviews LGTBO books. So before you send that mystery out for review, find out if you're sending it an appropriate group or person.

4 All review media are not the same. Many years ago there was *Affaire de Coeur* and *Romantic Times* and then *Publisher's Weekly*. Now, almost everyone and her mother has an opinion about a book, which is valid as an opinion, but not as a professional objective review. Take the time to find out whether a review provided by some is a help or a black mark. Some sites are known for overrating; conversely, some sites are never met a book or author they like--their attacks are personal and unnecessary.

5. Know the perimeters of the organization or individual from whom you are seeking a review.

*Goodreads* has a certain date each month by which the review is due. *Affaire de Coeur* does simultaneous reviews--reviews that come out on the pub date of the book. To accomplish this, *AdC* requires a submission--at least two to three months--prior to pub date. To do a decent, accurate evaluation, reviewers need time to read the book and compose a review.

So often we get emails with books attached, books that are out, came out last month, coming out next week, etc. Though we would have loved to have reviewed that book, the time frame in which it was submitted does not allow for it.

All that said about reviews, there is still hope. All is not doomed. Aggressive marketing can almost overcome any review. Marketing will create the exposure for the author, pique the interest of an apathetic reader, and in some cases cause the sales to skyrocket. But there is also good marketing, mediocrity in marketing and downright wasting one's money. However, that's a topic for another time. The best I can suggest is write the best book possible, do your homework, and don't worry about a review that wasn't what you expected. Use that review as fodder to do better.





# Spotlight Interview



## Debra Parmley

*Bestselling Romance Author*

Bestselling author LOREE LOUGH's award-winning novels have earned seven book-to-movie options. Her 105<sup>th</sup> published book, *Sweet Mountain Rancher* (#2, Harlequin Heartwarming's *Those Marshall Boys*) released in August with *Guardians of the Heart* (#2 Whitaker's *Secrets on Sterling Street*. (Coming soon: #3 in both series!)



here. Writing is more than a job to me, it is a practice and like any practice you do on a consistent basis it will continue to teach you if you are open to it.

**AdC:** *Tell us about your new book or series.*

**D.P.:** I'm excited to be writing a new series set in the 1920's about young women coming of age and becoming flappers. *Trapping the Butterfly* was the first in the series and was set in Hot Springs AR at the grand Arlington Hotel and *Dancing Butterfly* which I am working on now is the second in the series. *Dancing Butterfly* is Suki's story, the flapper in book one who encouraged Bethany to cut up her corsets and fly free.

**AdC:** *What is your idea of a perfect day?*

**D.P.:** Every day we are alive is a beautiful day. ☺  
I think a perfect day would be one where I went for an early morning walk on the beach, came back, had a light breakfast and then wrote for a few hours. Then I'd stop for lunch and have lunch with a good companion. Then I'd write some more and the writing would be going well until I stop for dinner. Maybe I'd go for a sail with a friend, but if not that then a walk on the beach after dinner. Then either a movie or I'd sit and watch the stars to end the evening. I'd be happy to enjoy those things alone or with a good companion.

**AdC:** *When did you start writing and why?*

**D.P.:** I have been making up stories in my head ever since I was a little girl. I loved escaping into a storybook and into imagination and I still do. I was the kind of little girl who always had a book in her hand asking to be read another story. Now as a writer it is like that for me but from the other side. I'm always imagining another story to write and I love sharing them with readers, passing that love of story on in a different way.

**AdC:** *What have you learned about writing since you started?*

**D.P.:** I've learned so much more about writing than I could list

**AdC:** *Do you have any hobbies?*

**D.P.:** I love to dance and used to teach belly dance, I shoot primitive archery with a horse bow and attend SCA events where I get to pretend to be a 12<sup>th</sup> century medieval lady, I love to travel and once escorted a group to Scotland. I enjoy travel and history and folkloric tales and music.

**AdC:** *What authors do you admire?*

**D.P.:** Sharon Sala, Lucy Monroe, Katrina Kittle, Elizabeth Berg and Alice Hoffman are a few of the women writers I admire. Boy Mayer and Barry Eisler are two male writers



Spreading Love One Story at a Time  
[www.DebraParmley.com](http://www.DebraParmley.com)

I follow. I read widely in many genres so it's quite hard to choose.

**AdC:** *What is the worst thing about being an author?*

**D.P.:** That there is very little predictability about having a writing career and it can be a real rollercoaster ride.

**AdC:** *The best thing?*

**D.P.:** That anything you can imagine can happen and it can be a real rollercoaster ride.

**AdC:** *What do you expect to be doing 10 years from now?*

**D.P.:** I would love to be writing books and living near the ocean, as I love to walk along the beach. The sea feeds my soul.

**AdC:** *What can we expect from you next?*

**D.P.:** I'm the host of a brand new radio show, *Book Lights*, which is live every Tue. night at 8:30 eastern on Readers Entertainment on Blog Talk Radio. Most of my backlist of books have been re-released and I am now looking into bringing them out in audio. That's another new direction for me. One goal is to finish *Dancing Butterfly* and have it published this summer. I also have a fantasy romance,

*Affaire de Coeur*

*Gatalop*, which I hope to finish and bring out this year. We are expanding *A Change of Direction* and re-releasing it as book one in the "Deep Nest" series, which is set in the future. Then there is the poetry anthology of love poems, which I still need to put together.

**AdC:** *Pass on some words of wisdom, please, to aspiring authors.*

**D.P.:** If the act of writing makes you happy and brings you joy, then don't ever let anyone rain on that and bring you down. If they rain on you, then learn to laugh in the rain. You will know in your heart if this is what you were truly meant to do. To be a writer, you must write. Anything that is not the act of writing, is not writing. If you can hold to the joy of writing and continue to write every week, then you can survive the ups and downs of a writing career. It has sustained me more times than I can count.



# The 2016 *Affaire de Coeur*

This has always been one of *Affaire de Coeur*'s favorite polls because you, the readers, are the determinants of the winners. Why do we put this in your hands? Because you're the ones who pay your hard-earned money for a book. You're the ones who take the time to read, sometimes wade through a book to give it a fair chance. You are the people who can make or break an author or a book. Word of mouth has been the impetus for others to buy a particular book, regardless of how the critics see that same book.

So we want to know what you think. What are the best for 2015? We'll give you the categories, you fill them in. This includes all formats, including self-pubs. The pub date of the book you nominate must be between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2015. You may vote online at [www.adcmagazine.com](http://www.adcmagazine.com) or mail the poll in to our offices, but vote! You have until September 1<sup>st</sup> to do so. Though we focus on women's fiction, we know women are not limited in their reading so we've added the most popular genre read by women. So Vote! Vote! Vote!

## **Women's Fiction—Romance**

**Best Contemporary Romance (Enter one name)**

**Best Historical Romance (Enter one name)**

**Best Romance featuring hero and/or heroine of color (Can be historical or contemporary—enter one name)**

**Best Romance featuring hero and/or heroine who is LGTB (Enter one name)**

**Best Paranormal Romance (Enter one name)**

**Best Erotica Romance (Enter one name)**

**Best Inspirational/Christian Romance (Enter one name)**

# Reader/Writer Poll

**Best Up and Coming Author (Enter one name)**

**Outstanding Achiever**—(this is an author who promotes reading, encourages/supports new authors, represents the genre in a positive way) (Enter one name)

**Top Ten Authors (Enter up to ten names)**

## Other Genre

**Best Mystery(Enter one name)**

**Best Horror (Enter one name)**

**Best Thriller (Enter one name)**

**Best Courtroom Procedural (Enter one name)**

**Best Fantasy/Sci-Fi (Enter one name)**

**Best Historical (Enter one name)**

**Best Inspirational/Religious (Enter one name)**



**MAY the Force Be With You (Until June starts burstin' out!)**

*(This*

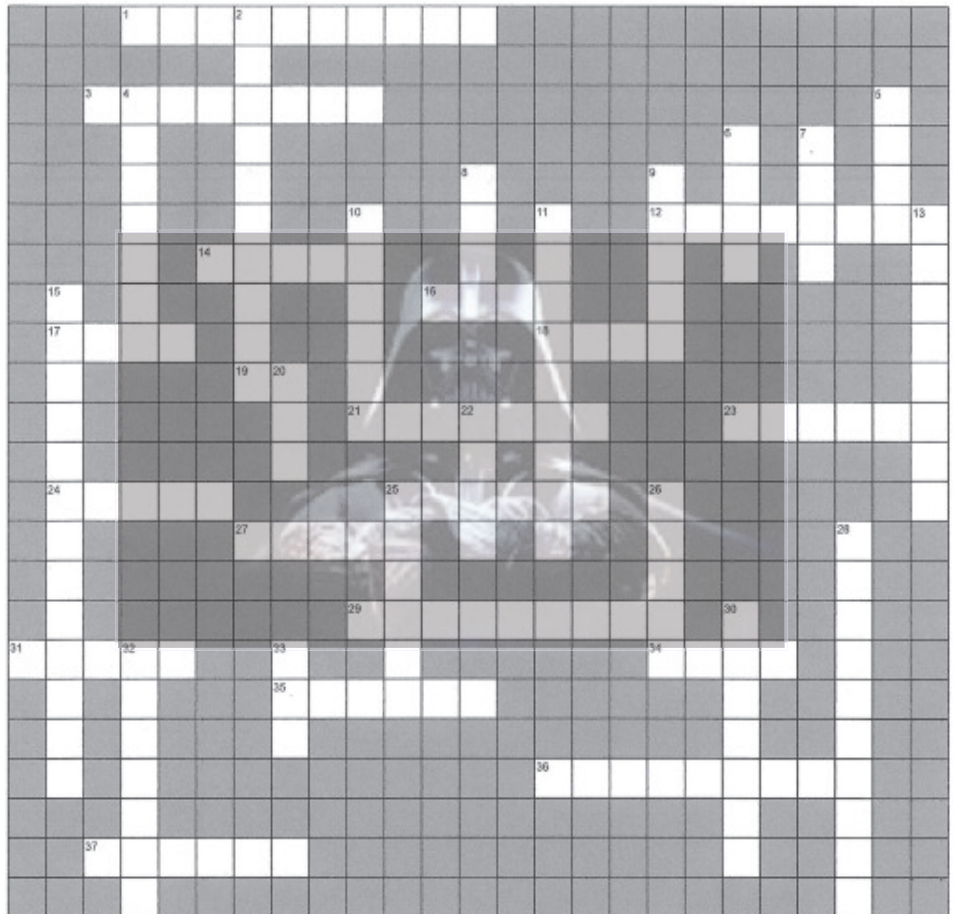
*is dedicated to one of the most popular franchises in movie history. See if you know the answers.)*

**Across**

- 1. Marks the end of school for some.
- 3. Day to remember the dead.
- 12. June is the most popular month for this romantic rite.
- 14. This galactic hero was played by Billy Dee Williams.
- 16. May's flower.
- 17. Voice of the villain was provided by James \_\_\_\_\_ Jones
- 18. Movie where the title of the puzzle comes from– Star \_\_\_\_\_.
- 19. The smaller, rounder of the two original robots, \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 2.
- 21. May's gem.
- 23. The zodiac sign for May 31<sup>st</sup>.
- 24. \_\_\_\_\_ de Mayo, the day Mexico celebrates defeating the French in 1862's Battle of Puebla.
- 25. She played Princess Leia.
- 27. He kept Leia captive and froze Hans.
- 29. Han's partner.
- 31. June's birthstone.
- 34. Harrison Ford played him.
- 35. Zodiac sign for May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- 36. C-3PO's major function.
- 37. Han's ship-the Millennium \_\_\_\_\_.

**Down**

- 2. Villain of the original movies.
- 4. Darth's boss.
- 5. June 14th, day to hang out the red, white and blue.
- 6. This little guy is the oldest and wisest (and can fight, too).
- 7. This princess of the galaxy has a big bun over each ear.



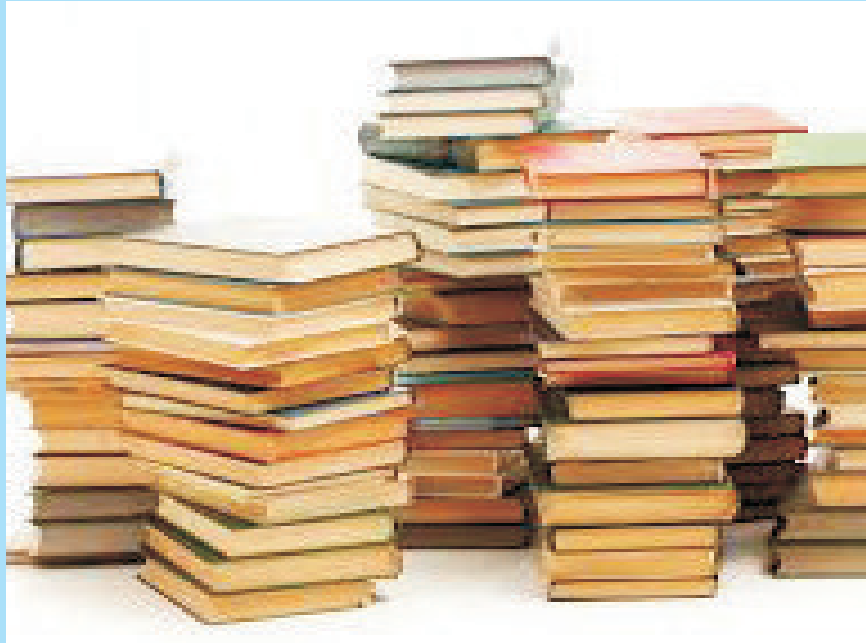
- 8. Luke finally became this type of knight.
- 9. Cute, furry creatures in the forest.
- 10. Han's partner's species.
- 11. Luke \_\_\_\_\_.
- 13. Longest day of the year.
- 15. Big sporting event involving equines.
- 20. A different SOS call...May \_\_\_\_\_!
- 22. June's birth flower.
- 25. "Luke, honor me on the 3rd Sunday in June, for I am your \_\_\_\_\_."
- 26. Creator of this movie franchise.
- 28. Day commemorating the day, June 18th, when Texas slaves learned they were free.
- 30. April showers bring these in May.
- 32. Muslim fasting period begins on June 6th.
- 33. Jean Luc's season after June 21st.

*Answers on page 38*



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## of Upcoming Releases



### July is Jumpin’

Bernard, J. *Drive You Wild*, Avon  
Castille, S. *Chaos Bound*, St. Martin’s  
Dimon, H. *Under the Wire*, Avon  
Johnson, A. *A Gift for Guile*,  
Sourcebooks Casablanca  
Paige, L. *Last Kiss*, St. Martin’s  
Rashaan, S. *Reckoning*, Strebor  
Rodale, M. *Chasing Lady Amelia*, Avon  
Shalvis, J. *Sweet Little Lies*, Avon  
Trentham, L. *Then He Kissed Me*, St.  
Martin’s Press  
York, S. *Lana and the Laird*, St.  
Martin’s Press

Buzzelli, E. *A Most Curious Murder*  
Crooked Lane Books  
Johansen, I. *Night and Day*, St.  
Martin’s Press  
Hyde, K. *Arsenic with Austen*,  
Minotaur  
McConnon, M. *Wedding Bel Blues*, St.  
Martin’s Press  
Wilson, F. *Paul Panacea*, Tor

### August is HOT!!!

Angell, K. *No Breaking My Heart*,  
Kensington  
Ashenden, J. *Dirty for Me*, Kensington  
Barnes, S. *His Scandalous Kiss*, Avon  
Bonander, J. *The Pleasure of the Rose*,  
Diversio  
Bristol, S. *Shifti*, Zebra  
Byrne, K. *The Highlander*, St. Martin’s  
Carew, O. *Nailed*, St. Martin’s  
Frampton, M. *Why Do Dukes Fall in  
Love?* Avon  
Gibson, R. *Just Kiss Me*, Avon  
Griffin, C. *Must Love Wieners*, St.  
Martin’s  
Hobbs, A. *et.al. Sexual Healing*,  
Strebor  
Jordan, S. *Hell Breaks Loose*, Avon  
Kincaid, K. *Fearless*, Zebra  
King-Bey, D. *Sweet Thang*, Strebor  
McCoy, S. *Sweet Surprises*, Zebra

Connolly, J. *A Time of Torment*, Atria  
Scottoline, L. *Damaged*, St Martin’s  
Press



# Contemporary Romance Reviews

## **Charmingly Yours (A Morning Glory Novel)**

*Liz Talley*

**Montlake Romance**

Trade Paperback

978-1503949683

★★★★1/2

An inheritance allows Rosemary to trade small-town Mississippi for New York City for a couple of weeks. Trying to find her cousin's loft, Rosemary finds herself in Little Italy being accosted by a very handsome man. Well, maybe not actually accosted, but he did try to get her to come inside his papa's restaurant. When Rosemary informs him that her mama said not to talk to strangers, the man promptly introduces himself.

Sal's mama has decided it's time for him to settle down. In fact, she has his life all planned out. He's going to run a branch of the family's restaurant and marry Angelina, a good Italian girl. Sal has fought her plans for years, but ever since his WASP fiancée dumped him, Sal doesn't have the will to keep fighting. He's just about ready to give in and follow the path that's been laid out for him. Then he meets southern belle Rosemary.

Sal and Rosemary begin a no-strings-attached affair.

But as the end of Rosemary's vacation approaches, the couple begins to wonder if it could be more than a fling. But Sal isn't going to escape the life his mama has planned for him, not if Angelina has anything to say about it.

This is the beginning of a new series. It's an enjoyable summer read.

*Sheila Griffin*

## **Check Out**

*Debra Parmley*

**Belo Dia Publishing**

E-book

B01AQH0EG6

★★★★

Librarian Betsy Bobbin has been taken with Nash Ware from the moment they met in the library, though he was anything but at his best at the time. It's a night of foul weather, and as she leaves the building, she discovers that she has a flat tire. Nash is there to take her home, and from there a tentative relationship begins.

It's a winding road to a first date because Betsy's sister Leann is coming to visit from college. She's wild and a bit of a trouble magnet. When Leann nearly gets

## Contemporary

assaulted and gets drunk enough to throw up, it creates an impediment to Betsy's and Nash's budding romance. Leann has a more serious problem as well, and that drama keeps Nash and Betsy apart.

Debra Parmley writes a short, sweet novel readers will enjoy. Her hero and heroine are sympathetic characters, and readers will empathize with them as they deal with Leann's chaos. Also, this tale sheds some light on the serious issue of stalking.

*Heather Nordahl Files*

### **The Flame**

*Gayle Trent*

**Grace Abraham Publishing**

E-book

978-0996764711

☆☆☆

Beryl Madison may not be a real superhero, but she plays one on TV. When not on set, she's a part-time, not necessarily mild-mannered auditor. She has taken in her nephews because of their parents' death. Her older nephew's teacher has decided that the little boy has a "fantasy ideation" because he has claimed that his aunt is a superhero. When she shows up in Terry Goodson's class in costume, he understands--and is attracted to Beryl.

When Terry goes to the IRS for an audit, he meets Beryl at her other job. In the audit, she discovers shady dealings by an attorney who also handled her sister's and brother-in-law's estate. But as this mystery brews, another forms: How can Beryl put her nephews first and resist her feelings for Terry?

Light mystery combines with sweet romance in this charming tale. Gayle Trent's hero and heroine are surrounded by fun and intriguing characters, from TV studio to office to home (Beryl's mother is lovely). Readers will surely be entertained!

*Heather Nordahl Files*

### **Hide Away**

*Iris Johansen*

**St Martin's Press**

Hardcover

978-1466887206

☆☆☆☆ 1/2

*Hide Away* is the latest Eve Duncan thriller series in which Eve and her longtime lover Joe Quinn are continuing to keep a young girl they saved from an assassin out of the lethal clutches of a Mexican drug cartel leader. When it becomes too dangerous to keep Cara at their home in Georgia, Eve goes to Scotland to help her adopted daughter Jane on a treasure hunt. But danger follows them. Can Eve, Joe and her lethal trio of friends protect Cara and themselves from the ruthless killers on her trail?

Readers will find themselves on the edge of their seats at the high tension level in this novel. The secondary characters like Jane, Cara, and their friends and allies--Jock, Laird McDuff and Seth Caleb, the man who is pursuing Jane romantically--help make this book so captivating. Johansen weaves in some mystical elements with the treasure hunt, prophetic dreams and even ghostly communications in a way that is plausible and harmonious with the overall story. The climax is a bit too abrupt, but also leaves a major plot element hanging. However the story is so enthralling, readers will want to keep reading to find out what happens next.

*Danielle Hill*

### **He Loves Me Not (Suspicious Circumstances, Book 2)**

*Morgan K. Wyatt*

**Sleeping Dragon Press**

E-book

978-1311134073

☆☆☆

Miranda is seeking sanctuary in an abandoned lighthouse after suffering horribly at the hands of her now ex-husband. She just wants to put her life back together again but is not yet ready to do that out in the world with everyone else. The company of her dog, Winchester, and visits from her brother are helping her along the path to recovery. Nick wants desperately for his sister to be whole again.

After being pushed off a cliff by her husband, Mina washes up on the shore near the lighthouse with no memory of who she is or why she was in the water.. Her arrival

stirs up a hornets nest of issues not only for herself, but for Mina and Nick too.

Then there's Jack. He's a government agent who faked his death and is in the area.

I really wanted to give this book five stars. Nick, Mina and Miranda are all interesting characters, and the story was suspenseful and intriguing in itself. But, while the overall story was very interesting, there were too many POV's going on in this book. This made it difficult to stay in the storyline. The character of Jack was not truly related to the rest of the characters at all, so it felt like there was another book mixed in with this one.

*Susan Boles*

## Hot in Hellcat Canyon

*Julie Anne Long*

**Avon**

Mass Market

978-0062397614

★★★★★



Britt Langley works two jobs in her home of Hellcat Canyon, California. She's happy with the safety of the life she leads. Then J.T. McCord blows into town. He is a well-known actor who was on a successful TV series for many years, but those glory days are behind him. Now, work does not come that easily. He's in the area for the filming of an upcoming series.

Both Britt and J.T. have issues. Britt is slow to trust another man after her marriage went horrifically wrong. J.T. had a rough upbringing and a recent, public breakup with a superstar actress. Still, J.T.'s and Britt's chemistry is stunning and unmistakable. How can they resist acting on it?

From the very first line of this tale, readers will be utterly captivated. Every part of the story is sheer perfection, but the best element is the dialogue, which will makes readers laugh and cry. Julie Anne Long gives readers brilliant twists in a tale that will whet appetites for a return visit to Hellcat Canyon.

*Heather Nordahl Files*

## Contemporary

### Love of the Game

*Lori Wilde*

**Avon**

Mass Market

978-0062311436

★★★★

Kasha Carlyle needs a higher-paying job and better medical benefits, for her newly discovered half-sister Emma needs specialized care and deserves the best that money can buy. Kasha has already put her new job with the Dallas Gunslingers in jeopardy. Star pitcher Axel Richmond has a nagging injury that is healing slowly. Gunslingers management wants him to have surgery, but she insists that she can help him rehabilitate without surgery. Management agrees with her proposal, but if she fails, she will forfeit her job.

Axel finds Kasha mesmerizing and wants to get under her aloof facade, but she hides behind their professional relationship. He needs to slow down in order to heal, something he is not entirely willing to do. He recently suffered a terrible loss and pushes himself to honor a promise. Kasha helps him to slow down. Now if only he can help her release her passion.

Lori Wilde's latest is part of her "Stardust, Texas" series. Characters in earlier stories play a major role, but this tale stands alone. It covers a lot of serious issues but can still be an exhilarating read. The chemistry between Axel and Kasha leaps off the page.

*Heather Nordahl Files*

### Montana Hearts: True Country Hero

*Darlene Panzera*

**Avon Impulse**

E-book

978-0062394729

★★★

Rodeo star Jace Aldridge is captivated by Delaney Collins, but she resists his advances. She will take his picture for *True Montana Magazine*, but has no interest in giving him her phone number. But when his horse, Rio, is injured during his routine, she comes running to make sure the horse is not put down. Thankfully, Rio is

## Contemporary

not injured that severely, but Jace will not be able to take him back to Arizona any time soon. He needs to find a place to stay.

The Collins family has endured more than its share of turmoil lately. As a result, they need a famous person to recommend Collins Country Cabins to bring the business back from the brink. Delaney doesn't really want Jace to be that person-- he's a hunter, which she finds repulsive-- but she doesn't have much choice.

Darlene Panzera's latest finishes up her "Montana Hearts" series. Jace is a charming hero, and Delaney's little girl is wise beyond her meager years. Delaney is sweet, young, and a little childish. Jace's family and the Collins family both have enemies that are hidden and formidable. Readers will enjoy watching the good guys win in this sweet romance.

*Heather Nordahl Files*

### Once and For All

*Cheryl Etchison*

**Avon Impulse**

E-book

978-0062471055

☆☆☆☆

When Danny MacGregor sees Bree Dunbar in the grocery store, he is not at his best. He hasn't seen her in years, and clearly things have happened that no one told him about. Bree has had cancer, and her hair is still growing in after chemo. Bree didn't want him to know, something that hurts and infuriates him.

Danny was Bree's high school sweetheart, but he walked away from her years ago. Now he's asking her to marry him! It will be a temporary marriage of convenience, but how can they keep their hands off each other? Even after all this time, their feelings have never died.

This title kicks off Cheryl Etchison's "American Valor" series. Heart-tugging scenes, stellar characters, and a sprinkling of humor will lead readers to keep turning the pages until late in the night. Bree and Danny share a magnetic attraction that is enchanting, and though her first instinct is to keep secrets, readers will like Bree. A lovely tale from a promising author!

*Heather Nordahl Files*

### One Lucky Hero

*Codi Gary*

**Avon Impulse**

E-book

978-0062372253

☆☆☆☆

Violet Douglas' life is far too full of chaos to accommodate a man. She has been raising her siblings since her drug-addled father left them, and was doing her best to hold them together before then. When her best friend takes her to a concert, they meet two men. Violet is attracted to Dean Sparks, but he's kind of a jerk.

Dean acts like a jerk because Violet is clearly a girl who will want a commitment, and he wants nothing more than a one-night stand. Still, they end up in bed together, and Violet is the one to take off and never call. But then her brother gets in trouble and is assigned to the Alpha Dog Training Program to work out his sentence. Violet is stunned to find that Dean works there. While she tries to keep her distance, he's hard for her to ignore.

Codi Gary's heroine has a great deal to handle in her latest. While her tendency to push Dean away can be frustrating, it's understandable, and Dean is an excellent hero. Readers will find much to enjoy here.

*Heather Nordahl Files*

### Rival Forces

*D. D. Ayres*

**St. Martin's Press**

Mass Market

978-1250086952

☆☆☆☆

Yardley Summers trains dogs for police patrol for a living. She loves her job and as a result she has little to no time for dating in her life. The company of dogs seems to be all she needs until a Doctors Without Borders doctor whom she knows and likes goes missing. Her only issue is that her past love and fellow trainer Kye McGarren is also helping to find him. Kye must somehow hold onto his love Yardley and locate her love interest doctor.

This was a decent book. You had me at "dog trainer," as I am a big animal lover. It is also an interesting career to feature in a romantic book. The main draw back was that the Doctors Without Borders missing person case element might have been too heavily focused on, leaving the book good but less romancey.

*Lenore Lovecraft*

## Contemporary

### Smolder

*Karen Erickson*

**Avon Impulse**

E-book

978-0062441218

☆☆☆ 1/2

Delilah Moore has had a thing for Lane Gallagher for forever, and she thinks he may be interested in her too. But he just won't make a move, no matter how hard she tries to get his attention. When she was a teenager, she dated his brother, but he's with one of her friends now, and that was a long time ago. When will he see her as an attractive woman?

Lane wants Delilah, but he thinks he's too screwed up to deserve her. His father cheated on his mother and she took him back. This example makes him sure he can't be in a healthy relationship. Will Delilah show him the error of his ways?

Karen Erickson's latest is part of the "Wildwood" series, and readers get the most out of this tale if they have followed the series from the beginning. Some plot points are resolved in this story, and some continue to a future installment.

*Heather Nordahl Files*

### Starfish Moon (The Brides Of Blueberry Cove - Book 3)

*Donna Kauffman*

**Zebra**

Mass Market

978-1420137491

☆☆☆1/2

Kerry was born filled with wanderlust. She'd never been to a place that made her want to stay. Until she landed in Australia.

Cooper, heir to an Australian cattle ranch, hired Kerry two years ago. She began to feel like part of the owner's family. But Kerry's feelings for Cooper were definitely not familial. She wanted him in her bed. But Cooper didn't appear to be interested. When Kerry received a call saying that the uncle who had raised her had suffered

a stroke, she was on the next flight home.

Uncle Fergus has recovered. But her siblings are getting married one after another, and Kerry has stayed put. She's not feeling the urge to move on yet. Cooper thought Kerry would come back as soon as her uncle was better. But a year has gone by without a word. Cooper has come to America to bring the woman he loves home with him.

Unfortunately, the reunion doesn't go the way Cooper envisioned. Kerry isn't ready to commit to spending the rest of her life in one place. Even if it's the only place she wants to be. Cooper sets out to change Kerry's mind.

*Starfish Moon* is a continuation of a series. While not imperative that one read the previous stories before starting this one, the large cast of characters makes it advisable. It's an enjoyable book.

*Sheila Griffin*

### Torn

*Cynthia Eden*

**Avon**

Mass Market

978-0062437402

☆☆☆☆ 1/2

Victoria Palmer is working with Wade Monroe on a missing persons case. She won't let herself get close to anyone because of her horrifying past. But sometimes she needs a little release, so she meets someone at a bar. Wade finds her and convinces her that he's the better bet, so they become no-strings lovers.

They are looking for a girl named Kennedy Lane who has been missing for five years. Victoria knows they won't find her alive after so long, and unfortunately, she's right. But this is no clear cut case. Along with the mysterious appearance of Kennedy's body, another girl disappears, and it soon becomes apparent that her disappearance is connected. And every suspect is soon shown to be innocent. This case is a challenging puzzle.

Cynthia Eden's latest title in her "Lost" series is a stunning thriller with dizzying twists and turns. Every time readers might think they have it figured out, the plot takes another turn. The main characters are immensely appealing. Readers will love this tale whether they've read prior books in the series or not. An extraordinary read!

*Heather Nordahl Files*

## Contemporary

### **The Trouble with Temptation**

*Shiloh Walker*

**St. Martin's**

Mass Market

978-1250067951

★★★★ 1/2

Hannah Parker wasn't sure what was going on. She had just awakened from a coma after being in it for seven days--they told her she had been in a car accident and now discovered she was pregnant. She remembered some guy called Brannon who had kept coming to her bedside when she was in the coma, and she really liked him. She figured he liked her because the baby was his. But, now awake, she had no memory of him (or her) before the accident. Hopefully, in time, her memory would return and her life with Brannon could return to normal as they got ready for their baby. She just wished she could remember what happened!

Brannon McKay lived across the street from Hannah Parker and had fantasized over her for over 10 years. He knew Hannah watched him from her window whenever she thought he wasn't looking. Then one day, it had finally happened, and the result was she was now pregnant. What Hannah didn't remember, but Brannon did, was that they were definitely NOT a couple and that somebody was trying to kill Hannah. The last thing that Brannon had done just before Hannah's accident was to tell her that he didn't want to be in any kind of relationship, baby or not. But he knew he was lying, and when she had her accident, he finally faced facts and knew he was in love with her and would do anything to keep her and the baby safe. But as Hannah's memory slowly returns and the threat to her life increases, will she remember what Brannon had done to her and will he be able to regain her trust and love?

Shiloh Walker's second novel in her "McKay" series is as scorchingly hot as her first one. Brannon has not been a very nice person when it comes to Hannah, but as he realizes he actually does love her, he becomes a true swoon worthy hero. Hannah is a tortured damsel in distress whose life is in danger and she doesn't even know why. As they try to unravel the mystery which ties into the first McKay story, Brannon has to figure out how to win over his lady love when she remembers he threw

her over. Can he convince Hannah that he has changed in just a few weeks? Even though this is the second of the series, new readers to the McKay family won't be lost. Ms. Walker does an excellent job of bringing the reader up to speed without losing the mystery and sexual tension of the story.

*Lani Roberts*

### **Wicked Heart**

*Leisa Rayven*

**St. Martin's Griffin**

Trade Paperback

978-1250065988

★★★★★

Elissa Holt is producing a new Broadway show which is great.

The only issue is that her ex, super famous ex Liam Quinn and his fiancée are starring in it. She has to keep her mind on her work and not on the memories of Liam. Liam and Elissa are beginning to feel the old sparks no matter what they do, and the fact that he is engaged is a complication. Can the ex lovers keep things all business and keep things simple?

This is one good story. The plot was simple and not over complicated which can take away from the more fun steamy parts. As for the characters, they were well written and seemed to be very authentic. It was also fun to have a Broadway show in the book which seemed like art about art and love.

*Lenore Lovecraft*



## **Dawn at Emberwilde**

*Sarah E. Ladd*

**Thomas Nelson**

E-book

978-0718011819

☆☆☆☆

Isabelle Creston has lived at Fellsworth School since the death of her mother when Isabelle was very young. She is now grown up and ready to graduate as a student from the school and become a teacher there. Though she strains against the rigidity and rules of the school, she must provide a secure future for herself and her younger sister Lizzie who is in her care since the death of their father.

The arrival of a handsome stranger bearing news that Isabelle has family who has been searching for her brings new hope for a brighter future than the one she's resigned herself to at the school.

Upon arriving at the family estate called Ember-

wilde, Isabel is plunged into a wealthy world that she is not prepared to navigate and finds herself in the middle of intrigue and deception. To create a safe new life for herself and her sister, Isabel must learn the secrets of Emberwilde.

This book is a wonderful trip into an old style Gothic mystery with all the requisites of that type of story. Hidden secrets, potential husbands who are hiding things themselves, intrigue and hidden motives. It's a great read for those who love Gothics.

*Susan Boles*

## **The Earl Takes All**

*Lorraine Heath*

**Avon**

Mass Market

978-0062391032

☆☆☆1/2

When her husband comes home from Africa, Julia also mourns the death of his brother Edward, who was



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wild and not well respected in Society. Except, unbeknownst to her, it's her husband who died. Edward--his twin--is masquerading as his brother, fooling everyone, including Julia. She is pregnant, and Albert's last wish was to make sure she did not miscarry, something which has happened before.

Edward's masquerade is torture for him. Because of Julia's advanced state of pregnancy, they do not make love. But he is strongly attracted to her even though he knows any intimacy would be a betrayal. She will hate him when she learns the truth, so he is greatly tempted to keep his secret forever.

Lorraine Heath's latest is connected to earlier titles but stands alone. Edward's secret is nearly unforgivable, so some readers may struggle with this, but Ms. Heath's gift for creating characters makes everything about this tale compelling and frequently heart-wrenching.

*Heather Nordahl Files*

## The Fairest of Them All

*Cathy Maxwell*

**Avon**

Mass Market

978-0062388636

★★★★1/2

Char Blanchard is struggling to keep her household afloat and has become a pickpocket to achieve that end. Her latest prize--a particularly fat purse--should keep finances afloat for a time. Unfortunately, someone saw her steal it, and she barely escapes. Soon, the household gets another opportunity at salvation--the possibility of Char landing a duke! When she attends a ball, the duke is utterly enamored of her. But the ball ends when his brother arrives... and she is horrified to see that Jack Whitridge is the man who nearly caught her!

Jack has felt an attraction to Char ever since he discovered that the little pickpocket was a woman. But he has more important things on his plate. He has returned to try to prevent England from going to war with the country he now calls home. But people see him as a traitor, so he must use his estranged twin brother's influence to

achieve his ends.

Cathy Maxwell's second book in her "Marrying the Duke" series is an appealing tale loaded with marvelous twists and turns. Her characters will keep readers riveted throughout, and the story stands alone. Don't miss this delight!

*Heather Nordahl Files*

## How the Duke Was Won

*Lenora Bell*

**Avon**

Mass Market

978-0062397720

★★★★

James, Duke of Harland, needs a wife. He chooses four women from a list of appropriate prospects and invites them to his home along with their mothers. He wants a woman who will not stir his passions but who will remain in England to teach his daughter to be proper while he goes back to the West Indies. But he is continually distracted by Lady Dorothea Beaumont who stirs up most improper feelings.

Lady Dorothea is an impostor. She is actually Dorothea's lookalike half-sister, Charlene Beckett, hired to impersonate her until she is back on English soil. Charlene is desperate to rescue herself and her mother from a life under the thumb of an evil nobleman. She will have all the money she needs if "Dorothea" is chosen to be the Duke's bride. So she throws all her efforts into winning James over when she should be guarding her own heart.

Lenora Bell makes a most auspicious debut with this scintillating tale. Her heroine is a delightful, memorable character. The author also includes unique secondary characters who elevate the story to one that should not be missed.

*Heather Nordahl Files*

## How to Manage a Marquess

*Sally MacKenzie*

**Zebra**

Mass Market

978-1420137149

★★★★

Nate, Marquess of Haywood, has been impacted by the Spinster's Curse along with his cousin, the Duke of Hart. His mother made him swear on her deathbed to

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protect his cousin from the curse, even if that meant he'd have to put off marriage until he turned forty. When he accompanies his cousin, he's tempted for the very first time to break his vow, when he meets Miss Anne Davenport. Anne wants to be the next spinster at the Spinster House of Loves Bridge, if only to get away from her father and his young soon-to-be-bride. Marriage will just get in the way of both their plans. But best laid plans...

Sally Mackenzie's characteristic humor and sexy romance is showcased in "How to Manage a Marquess." Nate is a very nice man, quite honorable and determined to do the right thing. He's fixed on ignoring his heart and libido, but his feelings for Anne get in the way. He's protective and sympathetic of her in the situation she faces with a father remarrying and being a spinster with nowhere to go. Together they have great chemistry and MacKenzie takes the time to develop their romance to its satisfying conclusion.

*Danielle Hill*

## **The Lady Who Saw Too Much**

*Thomasine Rappold*

**Kensington, Lyrical Press**

E-book

978-1616509934

☆☆☆☆

Gianna York began having prophetic visions after surviving an accident that took the lives of her two brothers. Her parents, not believing in the visions, drugged her into submission to keep her quiet. When her vision fails to save the life of a neighbor's daughter, Gianna vows that it will never happen again and runs away from her family. After revealing her true story to the headmistress of the girls' school where she had been teaching, she can no longer stay but is given an opportunity to become a companion to a young lady in another city. While holding the business card of the man who would employ her, Gianna experiences a vision of his death and vows to save his life, no matter what happens.

Landen Emsworth is a man with a painful past who has sworn never to fall in love or marry. His younger sister, Alice, suffers from excruciating shyness and is unable to participate in the social whirl of their class. In order to build more self confidence in her, he hires Gianna as a companion to help his sister become more

outgoing. But, he did not expect a woman so young and beautiful. Despite his reservations, Landen is drawn to Gianna, but is still determined never to let her become important to him.

Gianna's secret vow to save Landen from dying triggers more trouble than she anticipated, and Landen finds himself falling for her. Once her secret is revealed, can the two of them reconcile their differences or will it destroy them?

*The Lady Who Saw Too Much* is a great read. Both Gianna and Landen are very real and have believable issues with love and everything that goes with it. The secondary cast of characters is also well drawn. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who loves historical fiction.

*Susan Boles*

## **Lana and the Laird**

*Sabrina York*

**St. Martin's Press**

Mass Market

978-1250069719

☆☆☆1/2

Sabrina York's third outing in her "Untamed Highlanders" series features the youngest Dounreay sister, Lana.

Lana sees ghosts, which results in Lana having a kooky reputation that has ruined her marriage prospects. Her real dream man has yet to come until Lachlan Sinclair, the Duke of Caithness, arrives in Scotland. For a Scottish duke, he is far too English, but he still makes her toes tingle, just like in her dreams. Can Lana convince a duke who thinks he won't live to see thirty years that they belong together?

*Lana and the Laird* is a thoroughly enjoyable Scottish historical romance. Lachlan is deliciously manly but also vulnerable with his tortured past and a belief he will succumb to a family curse. Readers can't help but root for him to get the woman of his dreams, literally. Lana is refreshingly comfortable in her own skin, and she helps her uptight duke find his true self and unleash the passionate man inside. Lachlan's and Lana's eventful courtship, including sizzling love scenes, will have readers on the edge of their seats. The appearance of past couples--Lana's sisters and their husbands, plus Lana's irrepressible young niece--add wonderful flavor to this engaging novel with just the right touch of the supernatural.

*Danielle Hill*



## **Temptations of a Wallflower**

*Eva Leigh*

**Avon**

Mass Market

978-0062358660

☆☆☆☆

Sarah Frampton has a reputation as a wallflower, but she has a secret--she writes erotic novels that readers are devouring. If her identity as the Lady of Dubious Quality were to be uncovered, the scandal would be immense, but her compulsion to write cannot be denied. Her parents want her to be married, and her lofty position in society demands that she marry someone as socially elevated as she. However, she has fallen for Jeremy Cleland, a simple vicar. Though he is the third son of an earl, her parents would not approve.

Jeremy is in London on a mission to discover the identity of the Lady of Dubious Quality. His father considers her work to be filth and does not want that sort of writing to be published, as it is affecting the morals of society. The Earl controls Jeremy's purse strings and will reward him if he succeeds and punish him if he fails. He would be shocked to discover that the delectable Sarah is the woman he seeks.

Eva Leigh continues her "Wicked Quills of London" series with a delicious tale that stands alone. Her characters are true to themselves, and their passion sizzles. The rich plot makes for page-turning reading.

*Heather Nordahl Files*

## **The Untamed Earl**

*Valerie Bowman*

**St. Martin's Press**

Mass Market

978-1250072580

☆☆☆☆

In this latest in "Playful Brides," Bowman's light-hearted Regency historical romance series, Lady

Alexandra Hobbs has been in love with Lord Owen Monroe for three years. To her dismay, their parents have arranged his marriage to her shrewish older sister Lavinia. Alex agrees to teach Owen to woo Lavinia, in exchange for lessons in being a sparkling debutante of the *ton*, but she really wants a chance to get him to fall in love with her. Owen is a rake and a scoundrel, and he knows it. But the time he spends with Alex makes him want to be a better man, with Alex as his chosen bride.

Alex makes this book. She's sweet and effervescent. Her baldface lies about her sister's likes add wonderful humor. Readers will root for Alex to get her man. Interactions between her and Owen make the pages fly. Beloved characters from Bowman's previous books in the "Playful Brides" series show up and add to the charm of this book. While regrettably, it lacks the laugh-out-loud humor of previous books, *The Untamed Earl* is a satisfying read with enviable chemistry between Alex and Owen, and just enough pathos to add desirable depth to the story.

*Danielle Hill*

# Paranormal Romance Reviews



## **All Fixed Up (Ciel Halligan - Book 4)**

*Linda Grimes*

**Tor Books**

Hardcover

978-0765376398

★★★★

Ciel is an aural adaptor. Her ability allows people to alter the energy they project and take on the appearance of other people. No one has ever been able to see through an adaptor's assumed aura...until now.

Ciel is doing a press conference as astronaut Philippa Carson when one of the photographers quietly states that he knows she isn't Philippa. He not only asks who

Ciel is but what she is. Ciel is freaked out! Billy, her current boyfriend, thinks she's overreacting. But Mark, her former lover and current CIA handler, is concerned.

A few days later an adaptor is murdered in Central Park. At the funeral the same photographer shows up. He begins taking pictures of the adaptors that have gathered to pay their respects. Billy and Mark attempt to question him, but he jumps in a waiting car and takes off before they can apprehend him.

In the following days more adaptors are killed. Now in addition to fretting about her relationship with Billy and her lingering feelings for Mark, Ciel is worried about adaptors being killed. Will the murderer be stopped before anyone else dies?

This continuation of a series can be read alone. Although it has an unusual premise the book is somewhat of a disappointment. It's not as humorous as it's advertised

# Paranormal

to be. However, fans of the series should enjoy it.

*Sheila Griffin*

## **The Angel Wore Fangs**

*Sandra Hill*

**Avon**

Mass Market

978-0062356543

☆☆☆☆

Andrea Stewart fears for her sister who may have been lured into the clutches of ISIS via the Circle of Life, which operates on a Montana dude ranch. Andrea, a pastry chef, needs help, so she turns to Cnut Sigurdsson. She has no idea that Cnut is a Viking vampire angel!

Over a thousand years ago, Cnut was an unapologetic glutton in a time of famine. Michael the Archangel saves him from his sins, but there's a price to pay. Cnut spends hundreds of years (mostly) celibate, battling Lucipires to save the world from evil. Lucipires find many irredeemable sinners in ISIS's numbers, and Andrea is his ticket to the dude ranch full of recruits.

He must save as many sinners as possible... but instead he finds himself back in 850 AD. He and Andrea have unexpectedly traveled through time.

Sandra Hill's latest "Deadly Angels" book will keep readers riveted. The introduction of time travel injects something extra into this fun series, and readers will be right there with the spirited heroine.

*Heather Nordahl Files*

## **The Dark Vampire: A True Vampire Novel (Last True Vampire series - Book 3)**

*Kate Baxter*

**St. Martin's Press**

Mass Market

978-1250053770

☆☆☆1/2

Bria is sick of being treated like a prisoner. At night she sneaks out of her guardian's house and roams the city. One night, Bria returns to find slayers attacking her home. She rushes headlong into the battle. Unfortunately, Bria isn't as tough as she thinks she is. Fortunately, the dhampir is turned before she bleeds out.

Jenner, a recently turned vampire, has trouble controlling his bloodlust. The moment he meets Bria, Jenner realizes that she's his soulmate. But he is afraid to be around her. Jenner is terrified that he won't be able to control himself and will drink all of Bria's blood. Their mating remains unconsummated. When Jenner demands that she remain home unless he is accompanying her, Bria reverts to her old habit of sneaking out. Bria's decision places not only herself but all other vampires in danger. Her selfishness could result in the extinction of the vampire race.

This is a continuation of a series. Readers should read the previous books before starting this one. What little plot this novel contains is buried under graphic sex and overblown language. If all one wants is a sexy story, this is a good choice. But if a person wants a good plot, they should skip this book.

*Sheila Griffin*

# *Erotica Romance Reviews*



## **You Could Never Be**

*Amy Romine*

**Xtasy Books**

E-book

978-1487406226

☆☆☆☆

Sara Rozek and Will Carlisle are both very heart broken and damaged people. Unknown to Sara, however, Will has been lusting after her for months now. This all comes to be when the pair have a steamy encounter in a hotel hallway. Will is quite the hottie and any woman would want him, but after their evening together Sara feels like she was taken advantage of. Can they heal each other or simply do more damage?

This is a good short steamy read that I liked. The plot was simple and not too complicated, and the characters were well developed. It had a very relateable view point of the broken hearted just trying to figure it out again. Perhaps the author should consider expanding this into a full length book as she is very good. My only complaint was that it was a bit too short, and I am a glutton for the general plot.

*Lenore Lovecraft*



## **Cape Hell**

*Loren D. Estleman*

**Tor/Forge**

Hardcover

978-0765383525

☆☆☆1/2

U. S, Deputy Page Murdock has been assigned by Judge Blackhorne to head to Mexico and investigate rumors that ex-Confederate Captain Oscar Childress is planning an uprising to conquer Mexico City and start another Civil War.

Traveling by train with only a fireman and engineer, Murdock arrived in Mexico and met Felix Bonaparte, Oscar Childress' lawyer. Bonaparte warned Murdock of the dangers of searching out Childress and his men. Murdock, of course, did not heed the lawyer's warnings.

A bit of a difficult story to follow, *Cape Hell* put this reader in the position of not quite getting into the story. It felt a bit disjointed, unusual for such a high-caliber, top-notch author. Either way, if you love Estleman's books, you will still enjoy this one.

*Lauren Calder*

## **A Killer Ball at Honeychurch Hall**

*Hannah Dennison*

**Minotaur Books**

Hardcover

978-1250065506

☆☆☆☆

In the latest book in Hannah Dennison's humorous cozy mystery series, amateur sleuth and antiques expert Kat Stanford finds the skeleton of a socialite who has been missing for sixty years in a double hide in Honeychurch Hall. That's just the beginning of her troubles. As she unwraps more clues, they point to her mother, Iris, who was part of a local "lowbrow" caravan act and who had bad blood with the deceased, an American socialite. Kat has her work cut out for her, protecting her quirky mother and Iris' ex-convict stepbrother Alfred, neither of whom know how to stay out of trouble. The skeleton's discovery leads to even more buried secrets of the various denizens and staff of Honeychurch Hall, not to mention a possible hidden treasure.

The humor is a huge appeal of this novel. It is not zany, but near enough to make the reader laugh out loud on some parts. The tidbits about English manor homes

## Mystery

and the ongoing polite strife between the haves and have nots make for an interesting, read. The secondary characters are delightfully quirky and make for plenty of small town local color in this novel. Mystery fans will enjoy this latest visit to Honeychurch Hall.

*Danielle Hill*

### **Reckoning (The Kink P.I. Series: Book 3)**

*Shakir Rashaan*

**Strebor Books**

Trade Paperback

978-1593096069

☆☆☆1/2

Dominic Law was a very special P.I. Once a police officer with the Atlanta P.D., he was now used to investigate special mysteries. As part owner of NEBU, the local D/s fetish club and a full-time Dom, himself, he was in the unique position to travel the fetish world, investigating assaults and homicides that needed to be kept quiet from the vanilla world. Once his patrons crossed over the threshold of NEBU, they no longer were lawyers, bankers, judges, legislatures, etc. They were Masters and submissives. And what went on inside NEBU, needed to stay inside the community, unless they chose to be public with their lifestyle.

When a series of brutal homicides start occurring and are perpetrated on Dom's former and current submissives, his contact in the police force knew to contact him to help solve them quickly and quietly. As he traverses the fetish world trying to put the pieces of the puzzle together, he quickly realizes that the homicides and assaults are directed at him, personally. Now, not only does he need to find out who is after him and why, but, with the help of his business partner Ramses and his wife Nefertiti, both Doms, he must see to it that his girls and the other submissives are kept safe, as his position as their Master dictates in their world.

*Reckoning* is the third in the "Kink P.I." series, but it can be read alone. It can be little confusing, at first, if the reader is not familiar with the grammar and vernacular used in the fetish world, but the author does an outstanding job in explaining their meanings and how they fit into the kink world. This is not an erotica, it is a mystery, so if

the reader is looking for a book about kinky sex, this is not it. But if you are looking for an intriguing complex mystery within the kink world, then this series should be your cup of tea.

*Lani Roberts*

### **Teacups and Carnage (A Tourist Trap Mystery)**

*Lynn Cahoon*

**Kensington, Lyrical Underground**

E-book

978-1601836311

☆☆☆☆

*Tea Cups and Carnage* is the seventh book in the "Tourist Trap" mystery series by Lynn Cahoon.

Jill Gardner is the owner of Coffee, Books and More, a combination coffee bar and bookstore in the small Southern California coastal town of South Cove. She's very involved in the tourist trade that is the lifeblood of the town and manages to get involved in all aspects, including solving mysteries. She's very interested in the new girl in town, Kathi Corbin, who plans to open a shop called Tea Hee.

Kathi Corbin has moved to South Cove from Texas to start a new life. She's pretty closemouthed about the life she left behind. Dead bodies, including that of a stranger who seems to belong to a motorcycle gang no one has heard of, start stacking up, and Kathi seems to be in the middle of it all. Can Jill discover the secrets driving the murders in time to save both Kathi and the tourist trade in town?

This book was a very good read. It can stand alone if you haven't been reading the series. I highly recommend it for interesting and well-developed characters and a really good mystery.

*Susan Boles*

### **Wedding Bel Blues**

*Maggie McConnon*

**St. Martin's Press**

Mass Market

978-1250001894

☆☆☆☆

Chef Belfast "Bel" McGrath returns to her large, Irish family in Foster's Landing, New York, licking her wounds from a broken engagement and losing her job. She's a firsthand witness to a flirty distant cousin's swan dive off a balcony at her cousin's wedding. Her whole



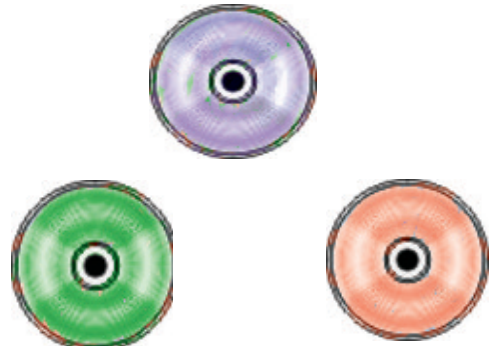
## Mystery

family's acting suspicious, more weird than usual. It's time to take off her chef's hat and put on her detective's hat and solve this murder.

"Wedding Bel Blues" is chocked full of atmosphere. Bel's family is delightfully quirky and as Irish as they can be. Although there is plenty of humor, there is a serious, almost morose undertone to this novel that makes it feel less like a cozy mystery. Bel is strong-willed and determined, but she gains awareness about herself and her family, and is on the road to gaining closure about her best friend's disappearance, and her place in the world and her family. With plenty of unique characters and a well-plotted mystery, this book will appeal to readers who like their mysteries with some food, family and a determined lead character. This book has a unique flavor that will keep readers coming back to visit with Bel and her family.

*Danielle Hill*





# Audio Books

## **The Calamity Janes, Gina and Emma**

*Sherryl Woods*

*Narrated by Tanya Eby*

**Brilliance Audio**

Audio CD

978-1501214462

☆☆☆½

Gina Petrillo finds herself back in Winding River, Wyoming, with troubles close on her tail. Hot shot attorney, Rafe O'Donnell is determined to stick close to his suspect, Gina. He is out to catch a thief but just may catch more than he bargained for in this fun and funny romp, *To Catch a Thief*.

Denver attorney, Emma Rogers is coming home for a reunion with her friends, seeking love and support for herself and her young daughter. Ford Hamilton is truly a distraction she doesn't need; besides he rubs her the wrong way. The Calamity Janes seem to think he is the right man for her, and so does her daughter. What do they see in the journalist that she can't see?

The "Calamity Janes" series is about fierce friends facing everyday issues and standing together to love and support each other. This is what being girlfriends are all about. Sherryl Woods never fails to bring readers and listeners' tales of endearing characters with quirks and foibles just like the rest of us. Performed by Tanya Eby, this installment in the "Calamity Janes" series is a cute and sexy anthology that is a light read on a spring day.

*Lettetia Elsasser*

## **The Calhoun Women: Amanda & Lilah: A Man for Amanda / For the Love of Lilah (The Calhouns #2-3)**

*Nora Roberts*

*Narrated by Kate Rudd*

**Brilliance Audio**

Audio CD

978-1501238123

☆☆☆1/2

Once again Nora Roberts pens two unforgettable stories of love and happily ever after. This Calhoun CD is a compilation of two books in the Calhoun Women series featuring four strong and independent women. There is plenty of intrigue and excitement, along with passion and romance.

"A Man for Amanda"

Amanda Calhoun has always been the most sensible of the Calhoun women. Brought up by their eccentric Aunt Coco, Amanda literally runs into Sloan O'Riley one day and their lives are literally changed. Amanda wants her chance to manage The Towers, but will meeting and loving Sloan take her away from her family and friends? Also, there is a rumor of missing emeralds left by her Great-grandmother Bianca being hidden in The Towers. Could this actually be true?

I enjoyed every moment of Amanda's story from beginning to end. Nora Roberts has the gift of grabbing readers from the beginning of her books and not letting go till the very end. There were plenty of twists and turns along the way with Sloan and Amanda, ending in another great love story. Read by the talented Kate Rudd, the

# Audios

story flows smoothly and she gives that extra “punch” needed at certain points in the story to make this a fun and exciting tale.

“For the Love of Lilah”

Lilah is a self-confident young woman. Lilah is a naturalist and she is also fey. She believes instinct and premonitions. She sometimes feels the presence of Great-Grandmother Bianca. Recently, she is getting the feeling that something bad is coming, she doesn't know where it is coming from, but she senses something wrong. When she goes out to watch the storm and the thunderclouds overhead, she doesn't sense that she will soon save a life. Max Quartermain is an American history professor who wants to write a novel. He was aboard Caufield's yacht in the middle of a storm and getting seasick. As he heads topside to get some air, he hears his friend Caufield and Captain Hawkins talking. He heard they were thieves and were using him to get information about some jewels which they would steal. When Caufield realized Max had heard everything, he told Captain Hawkins to lock Max in his room. Max ran for topside. When he was finally cornered, he did what he knew he had to do but didn't know if he would survive, he jumped overboard! He sensed rather than knew that someone was in the water to help him. They battled the waves and the sea until they reached shore. He looked at the face above him and saw its ethereal beauty and lots of red hair. He mumbled that she was real and that he hadn't believed in mermaids. Then he passed out. What will happen now? Will Caufield find the emeralds? Will Max be able to help himself and the girls? This too is a great book.

Letticia Elsasser

## Daughter of Sand and Stone

*Libbie Hawker*

*Narrated by Heather Wilds*

**Brilliance Audio**

Audio CDs

978-1501277917

☆☆☆

Set in Ancient Syria, a Sheikh's daughter exercises her independence by refusing to marry a man her father has chosen for her. Zenobia sets out on her own after her father's death toward her birthright, ascendance to the

throne. Marrying the most powerful man in Palmyra, she thinks she has finally found the pathway to power. Objecting to the marriage is the man's other wife. When Zenobia gives birth to her son, life doesn't get easier. War is breaking out, and Zenobia fights for her life, the life of her son, for love and for the power she believes his her birthright.

Narrated by Heather Wilds, she brings to life the story from the halls of Rome to the deserts of Egypt and Syria. Her vocal inflections made Zenobia's story a realistic experience. I could believe that I was eyewitness to the struggles in this time and place. I was very impressed by the story from beginning to end, with plenty of twists and turns to keep me guessing. I will be reading or listening to more of Libbie Hawker's work.

*Letticia Elsasser*

## Healing Montana Sky

*Debra Holland*

**Brilliance Audio**

Audio CD

B017224M2K

☆☆☆☆1/2

Antonia Valleau lost her husband to a grizzly attack and is left with nothing and no way to support her children in the mountains. She packs up their meager belongings and her children and travels to the small community of Sweetwater Springs. She is looked upon as a vagrant until the kindly preacher and his wife take her in for a meal and place to lay their heads while seeking work to support her boys.

Erik Muth has been looking forward to fatherhood with his young wife when tragedy strikes. His wife delivers a healthy baby girl but dies in childbirth, making it imperative that he find a wet nurse immediately or he will lose his baby girl, too. For their children's sake, Erik knows he must marry Antonia to provide the mother his daughter needs, while bonding with her two young boys.

*Healing Montana Sky* is a poignant look at life in the late 1800's; the hardships and grief, the joy and camaraderie as individuals deal with everyday issues. Loss and grief are a part of so many lives in this touching story about two desperate strangers coming together to make the best life for their children.

What begins as a marriage of convenience soon blossoms into deeper feelings as Erik and Antonia must work together to combat starving Indians stealing their cattle and to forge a life together. The characters are very well rounded and the story was well laid out, giving me a true sense of time and place in the late 1800's. The cast of characters made me want to travel back in time to meet

them all. Debra Holland has penned a beautiful story, making me want to go back and read the rest of the series.  
*Letitia Elsasser*

## Love Me Sweet

Tracy Brogan

**Brilliance Audio**

Audio CD

978-1501210044

☆☆☆1/2

The *paparazzi* have dubbed her the “wild child” celebrity with famous parents and her own reality show. When an old boyfriend releases a scandalous video, Delaney becomes the joke of the internet and rag sheets. Sneaking away to avoid more media interest, Delaney goes to Bell Harbor, Michigan. What turns out to be the worst winter in fifty years throws a curve to Delaney’s careful plans.

Adventure cameraman Grant Connelly has stayed away from Bell Harbor until a family obligation brings him back home. Bad weather, missing money, Elvis impersonators, and honky-tonk musicians get him tangled up with Delaney, and they take an impromptu road trip that just may lead to the Heartbreak Hotel if Delaney’s secret comes out.

Emily Sutton-Smith brings this cast of quirky characters to life for the listener. Hijinks and drama make *Love Me Sweet* a truly enjoyable romp from beginning to end. Great characters and realistic situations make this one of my favorite reads this month.

*Letitia Elsasser*

## The Ocean Between Us

Susan Wiggs

**Brilliance Audio**

Audio CD

978-1455867929

☆☆☆☆

Once again, Susan Wiggs sweeps listeners away with *The Ocean Between Us*, a touching story of a Navy officer’s wife and the identity she longs for. Grace Bennet realizes after a lifetime of following her husband from assignment to assignment and mothering her three children, that she has left herself behind somewhere along the way, though she can’t explain it to her husband.

Steve Bennett has no clue what is happening to his marriage and his wife in particular. There is a distance between them that Steve can’t seem to fix. When he is

# Audios

sent out to sea and a secret from his past comes out, he fears he has lost his family for good.

A tragedy at sea, just when Grace is finding herself, has her waiting to hear news of her husband.

Performed by Joyce Bean, *The Ocean Between Us* is an emotion packed novel that put this listener on edge for most of the audio. Grace and Steve are characters with whom I can certainly identify. Their grit and strength, their love and loyalty are things outstanding in this audio book. Bean’s performance opened up a new location to me and put me right in the midst of conflict and tragedy. Susan Wiggs never fails to give us everyday issues and memorable characters to capture our hearts.

*Letitia Elsasser*

## On the Rocks

Kim Law

**Brilliance Audio**

Audio CD

978-1511342902

☆☆☆ 1/2

Ginger is running her late father’s fishing business and feeling as if she will never find a man of her own. She sucks in the dating department, having tried several outlets to find a “forever” man to love and nurture.

Carter was Ginger’s best friend throughout high school but never thought of her as more than that. Running from heartbreak, Carter returns home to Turtle Island. He finds that beautiful and sexy Ginger is all grown up and building the house of her dreams.

*On the Rocks* is a touching and fun story with the typical coming home again synopsis. Though the storyline is familiar, Natalie Ross adds a certain element that made the story very enjoyable. Nothing overly tension filled, *On the Rocks* is a good way to pass the time listening to issues Carter and Ginger overcome to find their happily ever after.

*Letitia Elsasser*



# Audios

## **One Lavender Ribbon**

*Heather Burch*

### **Brilliance Audio**

Audio CDs

978-1491519455

☆☆☆☆

*One Lavender Ribbon* is the story of a young woman who is trying to move on from a bitter divorce. Her talents for restoration have Adrienne leaving Chicago to Florida and an dilapidated old beach house. While working on the beach house, she discovers some old love letters hidden in the attic, which sets the stage for this sweet love story.

Adrienne is so captivated by the letters and the author, she is compelled to track down William “Pops” Bryant, who lives in a neighboring town with his grandson, Will. Learning the story of “Pops” and Sarah’s love story was a beautiful experience, but the byplay of Will and Adrienne fell flat. They were too different and each has commitment phobias. Still, learning about the war torn lovers was well worth listening to this book.

Brilliance Audio never fails to provide quality performances for author’s greatest books. The voice of Emily Sutton brings the story to life, with her pure and clear vocal inflections. Though the story between Will and Adrienne wasn’t the most outstanding part of the story, Sutton gave it that “something extra” to keep me listening.

*Letitia Elsasser*

## **Seduced by Sunday**

*Catherine Bybee*

### **Brilliance Audio**

Audio CDs

978-1501228148

☆☆☆☆

Not having read the “Weekday Brides” series by Catherine Bybee, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that *Seduced by Sunday* was a book that could stand alone in the series. Number six in the series, this is Meg Rosenthal’s story. Matchmaker by day, Meg has come to an isolated resort to discover its potential as a location for her business. When she meets the resort’s owner, Val

Masini, she thinks he is an ass and tries her best to avoid him. Val thinks she is the worst sort of distraction, but neither can deny they have powerful chemistry.

Meg is a fiercely independent young woman who doesn’t believe love is for her. She wants nothing to do with commitment, even with a man as handsome and sexy as Valentino Masini.

Val is an intensely private and sexy business owner of Sapore di Amore in Florida. He falls instantly in lust with Meg as soon as she steps off the plane. Though he thinks she is a pain in the ass, he can’t deny his attraction to her.

Equal parts humor, passion and intrigue combine to make *Seduced by Sunday* a delightful addition to my listening library. Now that I have experienced Meg’s story through the voice of Tanya Eby, I am anxious to listen to the rest of the series. Bravo Ms Bybee, on a delightful book.

*Letitia Elsasser*

## **When in Rome**

*Amabile Giusti*

### **Brilliance Audio**

Audio CDs

978-1511327206

☆☆☆

Carlotta’s life is a mess; she’s just been fired, her family is a mess and she is forced to rent out a room at her apartment in Rome to a sexy and distracting writer. Her frankness has gotten her in trouble before, but she can’t stand the nasty habits of her new roommate. Luca smokes too much, he’s messy and he has a prolific love life. They are complete opposites, yet when they share a spontaneous kiss, it is fireworks. Carlotta doesn’t want to get involved with a love-em-and-leave-em guy. Trying to ignore the chemistry between them, Carlotta has a tough time reverting back to her boring life.

At times funny, and at times dragging, Cassandra Campbell tries to make the novel interesting. I think the story loses something in the translation. If you are looking for a light and frivolous romantic romp, you may love *When in Rome*, but if you like a book with a little more substance, I would try something different.

*Letitia Elsasser*

# *Booty from the Other Genre*



## **Spells of Blood and Kin : A Dark Fantasy**

*Claire Humphrey*

**June Thomas Dunne Books**

Hardcover

978-1250076342

★ 1/2

people. There are secondary characters who are likable but they only have minor roles in the story. This is a very dark and dismal book.

*Sheila Griffin*

Lissa's grandmother was a koldun'ia, a Russian witch. She was teaching Lissa her craft when she unexpectedly died. The old woman's death was a tragedy for more people than just Lissa.

Maksim became a berserker centuries ago when the ability to blindly kill was highly valued. But in the modern world this trait is less desirable. Decades ago Maksin saved the witch's life. In return she placed a restraining spell on the beast that lives within him. Her death has broken the spell.

Maksim has lived in relative peace since the binding spell was cast. When he is consumed by the violence once again Maksim knows something has gone wrong. He seeks out the old woman to find out why the spell has stopped working.

Along the way Maksim infects a young stoner with his berserker blood. With the restraining spell gone, all of Maksim's concentration is centered on not killing anyone. By the time he realizes that he's infected someone Maksim has no idea how to find the young man. If Maksim doesn't find him soon the need for violence will overwhelm the boy and he will begin to kill.

The main characters in this story are not likeable

puzzle ans

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